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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 02686

DEPT FOR NEA/NGA, INR

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV PINS IR TU
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH FEMALE UNIVERSITY OF
TEHRAN PROFESSOR

¶11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

¶12. SUMMARY. CONOFF SPOKE WITH A 32 YEAR OLD IRANIAN FEMALE PROFESSOR WHO TEACHES MANAGEMENT AT AL ZAHRAH UNIVERSITY AND ENGLISH LITERATZE AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY. SHE DESCRIBED CONDITIONS IN TEHRAN AND AT THE UNIVERSITY. DURING ONE VERY EMOTIONAL MOMENT SHE COMPLAINED THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION IS THE RESULT OF WESTERN INTERFERENCE IN IRANIAN INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

¶13. CONOFF SPOKE BRIEFLY WITH A 32 YEAR OLD FEMALE PROFESSOR FROM AL ZAHRAH (WOMEN'S) UNIVERSITY IN THE VANAK NEIGHBORHOOD OF TEHRAN. SHE ALSO TEACHES AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY. SHE TEACHES 12 HOURS PER WEEK AT AL ZAHRAH THE FORMER FARAH UNIVERSITY, WHICH IS A WOMEN ONLY UNIVERSITY AND 8 HOURS PER WEEK AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY. IN TEHRAN UNIVERSITY SHE IS ONE OF 30 FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

¶14. SHE SAID THAT MOST OF THE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN COURSES IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE DEPARTMENT ARE LEARNING ENGLISH TO ENABLE THEM TO STUDY ADVANCED COURSE WORK IN OTHER FACULTIES, WHICH USE TEXTS AND RESEARCH MATERIALS PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH. ALTHOUGH THE CLASSROOMS AND LECTURE HALLS ARE CO-ED THE MALE STUDENTS SIT ON ONE SIDE OF THE ROOM AND THE FEMALE STUDENTS SIT IN A GROUP ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE. ALL FEMALE STUDENTS AND FEMALE FACULTY HAVE TO WEAR "APPROPRIATE ISLAMIC DRESS." WHEN ASKED IF SHE WAS TREATED WITH RESPECT BY THE MALE STUDENTS SHE SAID THAT SHE HAS NEVER HAD A PROBLEM.

¶15. INFORMANT TOLD CONOFF THAT IT IS HER OPINION THAT THE MAJORITY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN IRAN HAVE CONNECTION TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLICAN PARTY, A CERTAIN MULLAH, OR IN SOME WAY HAVE CONVINCED OFFICIALS OF THEIR STRONG ISLAMIC BELIEFS. SHE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT MOST PEOPLE IN IRAN ARE TIRED OF THE REGIME, A COMMENT WE HAVE HEARD NUMEROUS TIMES FROM A WIDE ASSORTMENT OF PEOPLE. PEOPLE HAVE TO ACT FAITHFUL AND "PRETEND TO FOLLOW THOSE STUPID, CRAZY MULLAHS, BUT THE MAJORITY NO LONGER BELIEVES IN THE GOVERNMENT. HOW CAN THEY WHEN THINGS ARE SO EXPENSIVE AND ALL THOSE BOYS ARE DYING IN THAT SENSELESS WAR IN BASRA."

¶16. WHEN ASKED WHY THE REGIME IS ALLOWED TO CONTINUE IF SO MANY PEOPLE DISLIKE IT SHE SAID THAT EVERYONE IS AFRAID. "IF YOU GO ALONG WITH THEM THEY WON'T HURT YOU AND THERE IS ALWAYS SOME BENEFIT, LIKE THE STUDENTS GETTING ACCEPTED INTO UNIVERSITY." SHE ADDED, "THE PEOPLE KNOW THAT IF THEY DEMONSTRATE KHOMEINI WILL KILL THEM. SHE POINTED OUT THAT THE SHAH CONTINUED TO PAY STRIKING WORKERS AND ADDED "IF HIS TROOPS HAD KILLED A FEW THOUSAND HE WOULD STILL BE IN POWER. KHOMEINI WOULD DO THAT WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT IT. THAT'S WHY NO ONE TRIES TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT."

¶ 7. SHE SAID THAT THIS YEAR APPROXIMATELY 600,000 STUDENTS WOULD TAKE PART IN THE NATION-WIDE UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAMS BUT ONLY 40,000 TO 50,000 WOULD BE ACCEPTED. "THIS AND THE WAR IS WHY YOU HAVE SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE OUT IN THE WAITING ROOM," SHE SAID. "DO YOU BLAME THEM? IF THEY DON'T GET ADMITTED TO A UNIVERSITY WHAT CAN THEY DO, THERE ARE NO JOBS." WHEN ASKED HER OPINION OF THE NIV APPLICANTS SHE SAID, "I TOLD YOU. THERE ARE NO JOBS. FOR THE BOYS IF THEY CAN'T GO TO SCHOOL WHAT IS LEFT? GOING TO THE MILITARY."

¶ 8. INFORMANT SAID THAT FEMALE UNIVERSITY FACULTY ARE PAID SALARIES EQUAL TO THAT OF MALE COUNTERPARTS AND THERE IS NO OPEN DISCRIMINATION, HOWEVER, "THEY DO THINGS, LITTLE THINGS TO UPSET YOU." A FACULTY MEMBER IS ONLY ALLOWED TO TEACH 24 HOURS PER WEEK, BUT THEY TRY TO FIND EXCUSES TO KEEP WOMEN FROM CARRYING A FULL LOAD. "HAVING HAIR EXPOSED COULD BE GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION, SUCH AS HAVING A COURSE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOUR SCHEDULE." SHE TOLD CONOFF THAT MOST STUDENTS ARE BIDDING THEIR TIME, HOPING THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS WILL IMPROVE BY THE TIME THEY GRADUATE. SHE BELIEVES THAT THE AVERAGE STUDENT IS WEAKER AND LESS MOTIVATED THAN IN THE PAST. "THERE REALLY ISN'T MUCH INCENTIVE TO EXCELL."

¶ 9. AFTER LENGTHY QUESTIONING SHE JOKED THAT CONOFF SHOULD TELL HER WHEN THE U.S. PLANS TO TOPPLE KHOMEINI. WE FIND IT INTERESTING THAT MANY IRANIANS INCLUDING EDUCATED AND WESTERN-ORIENTED PROFESSIONALS SUCH AS THIS PROFESSOR BELIEVE THAT THE SHAH'S DOWNFALL WAS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE U.S. OR A COMBINATION OF WESTERN POWER BROKERS. WHEN CONOFF REMINDED HER THAT THERE WERE NO AMERICANS IN IRAN TO PROVIDE US INFORMATION SHE LAUGHED AND SAID, "YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE AN AMERICAN TO TELL YOU WHAT IS GOING ON; THE CIA DOESN'T USE JUST AMERICANS. I'M SURE THAT YOU OR SOMEONE IN YOUR GOVERNMENT KNOWS JUST AS MUCH AS RAFSANJANI AND KHOMEINI DO ABOUT MY COUNTRY."

¶ 10. COMMENT. IN THE IRANIAN WORLDVIEW THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE OR SOMETHING ELSE TO BLAME FOR ONE'S MISFORTUNES. THIS MAY BE A RULER, A BOSS, THE WEATHER OR FATE IN GENERAL. IT IS INTERESTING, HOWEVER, THAT SO MANY IRANIANS BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. INTERESTS ARE ENHANCED BY PROLONGING THE WAR BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ AND BY KEEPING KHOMEINI IN POWER. END COMMENT.

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